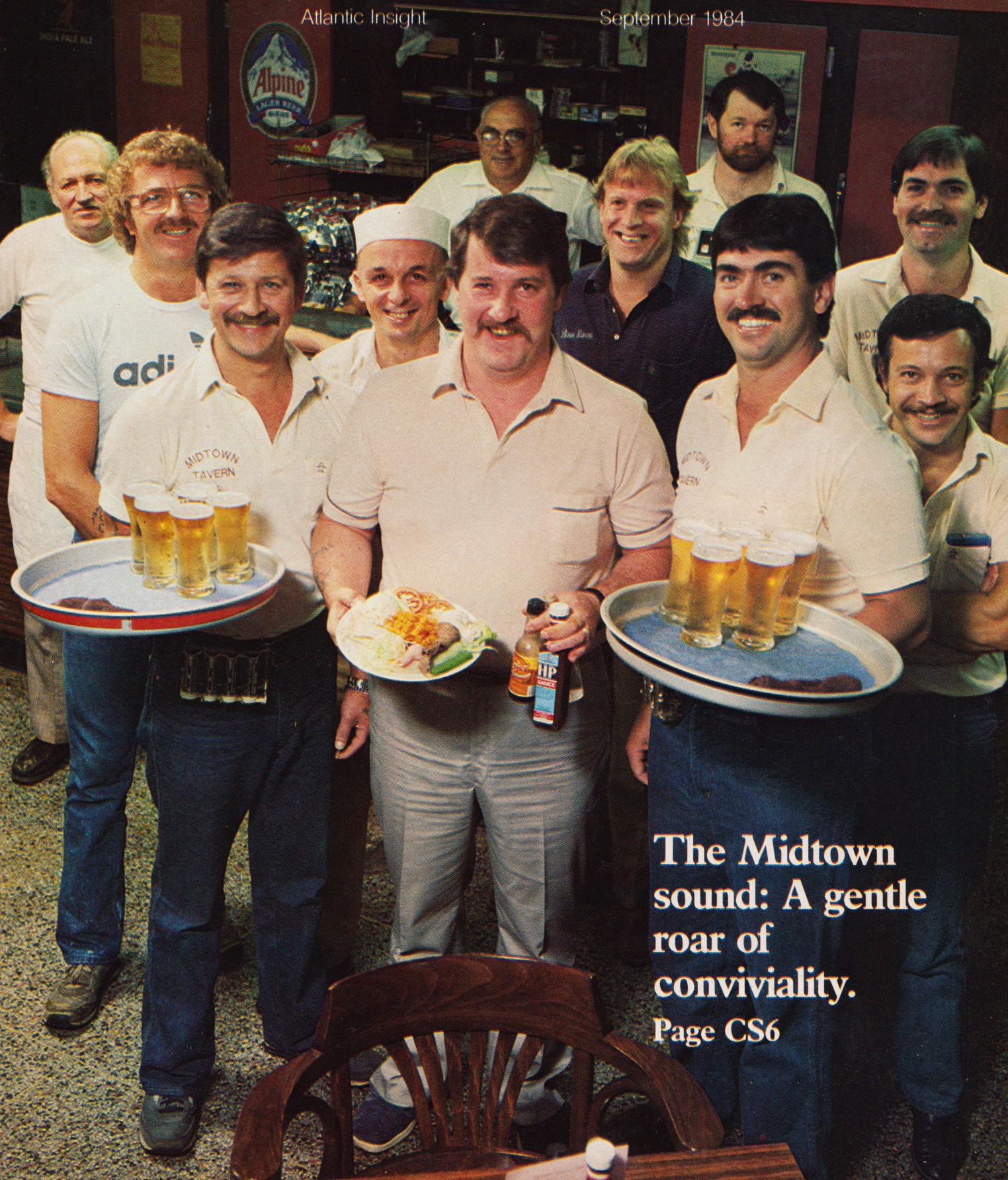


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CITYSTYLE

Atlantic Insight

September 1984



**The Midtown
sound: A gentle
roar of
conviviality.**

Page CS6

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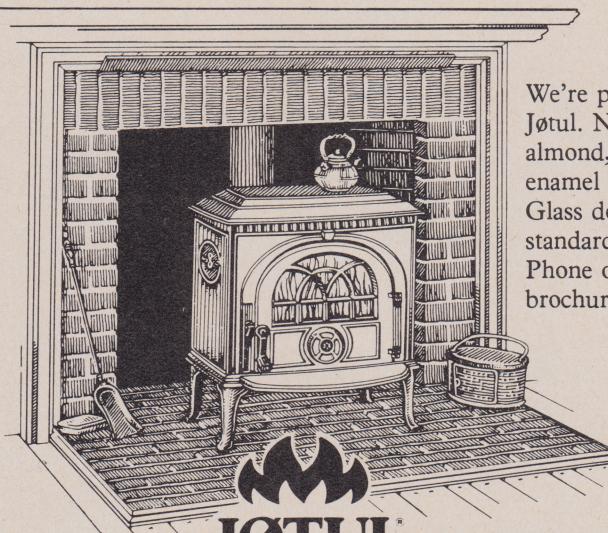
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Publisher's Letter

September definitely does not jump to mind as the most festive month of the year. September marks the end of barbecues and beach parties, holidays and wilderness retreats, and the beginning of the work and school years. It's a time when young men's (and women's) fancies grudgingly return to thoughts of the daily grind. Perhaps that is why Harry Bruce's story on The Midtown Tavern, one of Halifax's most venerable watering holes, is particularly appropriate for our September issue. Readers of *Atlantic Insight* will easily recognize Harry Bruce as one of our most frequent contributors, and one of Canada's finest wordsmiths. What most readers won't know is that Bruce is also one of Halifax's most eminent bar-hoppers who firmly believes eating, drinking and being merry is *not* a seasonal affair. In fact, one might say Bruce is something of a connoisseur on this score. "This is a talker's tavern," he writes in his cover story, "No music pollutes the Midtown sound. Customers don't want anything to interrupt the table-talk but the delivery of food and beer." Whatever your feelings are about The Midtown, we're sure you'll enjoy Bruce's piece. You are, after all, in the hands of an expert.

We're pleased to announce, with this issue, the reappearance of CityForum, our letters from readers section. Our September letter concerns Heather Laskey's CityWatch column on the new Art Gallery of N.S. which ran in our August issue. It's great to know we're reaching readers and inspiring a few to make that long journey from merely thinking about writing to us to actually putting pen to paper. Write down any thoughts you have about *CityStyle*, c/o *Atlantic Insight*, 1668 Barrington St., Halifax, N.S., B3J 2A2.

Jack Daley
Publisher

CITYSTYLE

Portraits of a common man

Halifax artist Gordon Roache may never get rich with his candid renderings of street scenes and people. But so what. He's happy.



ALBERT LEE

If you want to know how good an artist Gordon Roache is and why he paints the pictures he paints, you'd better start by talking to Jovanna Roache. "He's a real humanist," she says. "He tries not to make strong distinctions between people in his art. He loves the aged, the forgotten... He wants to give the forgotten a place. He wants to give them some dignity." Jovanna, Gordon's press agent who also happens to be his wife, may not exactly be... well... objective. But Gordon likes to keep to himself a lot, and it's a fact that nobody on earth is closer to him than Jovanna. Nobody, that is, with the possible exception of the people whose haunted eyes and faces he routinely captures on canvas.

Look into the eyes of one of Roache's old women scuffling through the winter muck of a Halifax street, and you're absolutely sure at some point he met that woman on that same street, asked her how her life was going and listened carefully as she told him. Analyse one of his scenes of urban poverty, the lonely old men standing around a street corner, the trees stripped clean behind them arching towards an angry, grey sky, and

you're convinced Gordon Roache, an artist who prefers to paint through the night and take long walks at the break of dawn, has been there.

"People often ask Gordon where he gets his inspiration for the characters he portrays," Jovanna says. "He tells them he paints the people he meets when he's out walking." But Gordon's inspiration runs deeper. "I'm an insomniac," he says. "Even when I dream, I'm thinking. Sometimes I see the faces in my dreams. Sometimes... the faces look like me."

Born 46 years ago in Halifax and brought up in the north end of the city, Gordon's father drove a coal truck for a living. His mother stayed home to raise her eight kids. Gordon's family wasn't destitute, but he and his brothers and sisters lived a rough working class life. His father died in 1965. His mother is still living. In school, Gordon sketched and painted, primarily as a release from the daily grind of trying to make do on very little. "I was never outstanding at art, though I did seem to do well in industrial arts and art class," he recalls. "But I didn't get serious about my work

until after I left school." Gordon spent much of his youth pursuing other distractions. "I owned a 650 Triumph motorcycle when I was young, and I was part of a gang. We never did anything bad, however. I liked to drink a lot in those days." Eventually, he found a job at a Halifax dockyard, and it was here, he says, he discovered much of what was later to inspire him.

He began to take his art seriously when he was in his early 20s and a kindly old woman living in Halifax decided he should study at university. His unexpected patron even offered to pay his tuition and expenses. But Gordon refused. "I resisted the idea at first. I just didn't want to go that route. Later I changed my mind. I didn't take her money, but I'm thankful for her inspiration." He studied part-time for three years under Julius Zarand, then head of St. Mary's University's art department. And then he struck out on his own. He's had studios all over the city.

Gordon met Jovanna at a showing of some of his paintings in a Halifax gallery in 1975. "I really met his paintings first," Jovanna says. "I saw this fan-

tastic work and I wanted to meet the artist... to see if he was real." Gordon took Jovanna down to the gallery after hours to show her more of his work. "I saw all those people," she says. "I saw the forgotten, the poor and the lonely. I was really struck by his compassion and sensitivity." She paid \$10 for a piece Gordon entitled "The Old Couple." "I've never paid any more for it," she laughs, "That sort of brought us together... we became friends." They married and Jovanna became Gordon's personal manager. She also writes a bit of poetry. "Gordon is good one on one, but he can't handle crowds... he's shy," she says.

"Halifax is more of a city now than it

used to be," Gordon says. "It has always been a place full of many different people, but now it's a real city." Unlike many artists who prefer absolute seclusion when they create, Gordon immerses himself in the noise and bustle of the urban dweller. "Some painters thrive on negative space. I need busy space. I get a vision of what I want to put down on canvas. I can see it in my head." He plans his pieces like a theatre director plans a stage production. "I seek my setting, my lighting, and then I get my characters. I spend more hours researching and planning than I do actually painting." He sets five stages to composing a piece. The first is the layout which accounts for about 70 per cent

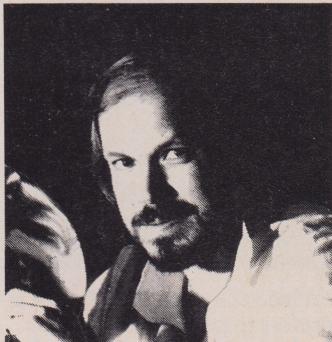
of original painting. The next four stages are a process of refining the details until he feels he's captured a subject. "Three or four months after I've finished something I'll usually go back to it and look it over. I may change it. I may leave it alone." Gordon believes a painter needs to be relaxed to do his work. "My paintings are like a team... they tie in together. And when I'm relaxing, I'm usually looking at my work and finding threads."

Nevertheless, though he does about 40 paintings a year, he's plagued with the feeling that he just hasn't the time to paint everything he would like to. "Time is extremely insufficient for me. The saddest thing of all is that I know I can't paint at the same rate ideas come to me." Still, there's consolation in knowing that he is probably one of the few Halifax artists who can exist on his work. In fact, Gordon has achieved some minor fame in recent years. He's

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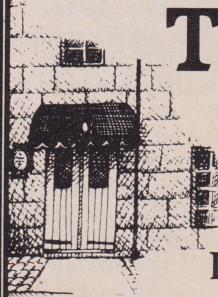
Peter Fromme-Douglas, artist of the award winning "Plate of the Show," Canadian Plate Fair, Toronto, 1984, presents his latest collection of paintings as limited edition collector plates. His portraits of children embody the feelings of

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Gordon plans his pieces like a theatre director plans a stage production

had local shows of his art since 1978, and every November, he features his most recent work in the Georgian Room of the Lord Nelson Hotel. This year, he has a piece in the sacred art celebration organized for the Pope's visit by Halifax gallery owner Robert Dietz. And he has a show coming up in Montreal in 1985. He's even produced a video for CBC's television program, *Portraits of the Maritimes*, called "The Artist and his People."

But, in the end, fame is not what Gordon is after. And he knows he's not likely to get it living in this part of the country. He's more interested in painting the scenes and characters of old Halifax and remaining true to what inspires him. "The old part of the city, with its old men and women, its rundown houses, is like an old man of the sea," he says. "I want to paint the immediate environment... to paint exactly what I see. I like this city's strength of character. It has withstood the test of time."

Chances are, so will Gordon Roache's art.

CITYSTYLE

CityForum

Bravo, Heather Laskey!

In *Art for whose sake?* (Citystyle, August) she has managed to express (delightfully) the mute frustrations of artists and art lovers alike. The design of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia must centre on the function of the institution rather than some misbegotten esthetic of "eclectic, post-modern" form. The majority of gallery patrons will never be given (nor would they want) the chance to sit on either a board of directors or building committee. Yet it is our support which will determine the success or failure of the new AGNS. An open competition, as recommended by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, would surely have better protected our interests. Perhaps the most galling point made by Ms. Laskey deals not with art but with the arrogant attitude of Deputy Services Minister Don Power. His dismissal of recommendations for open competition in the design of public buildings as "of no consequence whatsoever" seems strangely inconsistent with the provincial government's professed support of free enterprise.

Paul McCormick
Halifax, N.S.



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CITYSTYLE

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Christian comic books, heavy metal gospel rock music and crucifix bumper stickers

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Three cheers for the Midtown . . .



PHOTOS BY DAN ROBINSON

No solemn fitness buffs need apply at the Midtown. This is a tavern for talkers and arm-chair athletes. And if you can find a seat, there's no better place to eat, drink and be merry.

by Harry Bruce

Solemn fitness buffs abhor the counterproductive habit of topping off a footrace with beer, and that's why it is that after the Alpine Fun Run or a Natal Day race you won't find solemn fitness buffs in the Midtown Tavern. What you will find are dozens of decidedly unssolemn joggers who've whizzed from the finish line not to the showers but straight to that most gratifying of all rewards for hot, sweaty effort: Cold, sweaty glasses of cold, draught beer. "When they get through running," says Midtown owner Doug Grant, "they run right down here."

The "athletes" are still in their clammy jogging gear. Their armpits and crotches are soaking. Their pulses have not returned to normal speed. Before they've even gotten their breath back, they're diving joyously into the suds, and ordering up fish and chips (\$2.60), fried pepperoni and chips (\$2.50), combination pizza (\$2.85),

grilled sirloin steak (\$3.05), and side orders of onion rings (90 cents) and mushrooms (\$1.10).

Again, solemn fitness buffs refuse to down anything but Gatorade for an hour after hard running, but the point about the Midtown is that its devotees don't go there to be solemn about anything. The Midtown is both jocular and jockular — known what I mean? There's something specially whacky about the sight of gasping joggers grabbing most of the 108 Midtown seats, but they contribute nothing unique to the Midtown Sound. No matter who's there, the noise is pretty much the same, morning, noon and night. The place attracts those who want to eat (cheap food), drink (draught beer), and be merry (together); and the Midtown Sound is a gentle roar of conviviality, a nonstop hum of conversation, underscored by the clink and clatter of quick service. Let the good times roll.

This is a talkers' tavern. No music pollutes the Midtown Sound. Even during sports events, the TV volume is off (though not the picture) on the set that hangs high in the northern end of the room. Doug Grant, the beefy proprietor, knows a thing or two about his customers. First, they don't want anything to interrupt the table-talk but the delivery of food and beer.

Second, anyone who cares enough about sports to watch games in a tavern needs nothing more than the silent TV picture to know what's going on. Third, Midtown regulars are traditionalists. They like the place exactly as it is, and has been: Functional, unadorned, brown, shiny. A roomful of hard chairs, arborite tabletops, a never-ending shuffleboard game, and harsh, useful lighting.

The chief ornaments in the Midtown are the fastball trophies that the "Midtown Indians" and other Grant-sponsored teams have copped, and the bare breasts of the women in the color photographs on the official matchbooks of "Midtown Tavern & Grill Ltd., Draught and Bottle Beer, Fine Food, Corner Prince & Grafton St., Opposite City Parking Lot, Where Old Friends Meet, Phone 422-5213." You won't find a more informative matchbook cover than that. The slogan nearest to the women, whose assets put Playmates of the Month to shame, is "Home Style Cooking." The Midtown is like a good gas station. It provides vital services efficiently and unpretentiously without sacrificing friendliness.

Except for the welcome proliferation of women drinkers — some nights, though never at lunch, they actually outnumber the men —

the Midtown has scarcely changed since I first saw it in 1971. It may be the most changeless commercial enterprise of postwar Halifax. Founded in 1949, it earned praise in *Halifax* magazine in 1980 for being "almost as ancient as the Seahorse tavern and far more constant . . . as much a Halifax institution as the Old Town Clock." In the tabloid *Barometer* in 1978, radio announcer Pat Connolly — an authority on both sports and historic watering holes — called the Midtown "the acknowledged sports crossroads of modern Halifax . . . a line drive from the old Town Clock and a fly ball away from Irishtown near the waterfront." Connolly's still going strong, but *Barometer* and *Halifax* disappeared years ago. The Midtown bridges the ages, without pandering to fashion.

Continuity at the Midtown is not just a matter of Grant's refusing to change the decor. Before taking over in 1971 he had spent 20 years there, working with previous owner Guy Dauphine.

Waiter Gerry Haverstock, Grant says, "has been here about 18 years." Haverstock knows so many longtime draught-quaffers he should consider running for public office. Spare waiter John Lutley has worked for the Midtown for a quarter-century. Moreover, two of Grant's



Owner Grant (right) and Mgr. Walker: The Midtown is where old friends meet.

...And a quiet "hip...hip" for the Grad House!

In a far corner on the second floor of Dalhousie University's Graduate House club, a young man who has been feverishly pencilling calculations into a physics textbook for over an hour slugs back the rest of his Newcastle Brown Ale and scowls in the direction of two refrigerator-sized speakers. The music is loud and decidedly raunchy. He turns the ruckus down and takes a seat by an old piano. "Now for your listening pleasure," he announces to a crowd of about 25 students, "a little head music."

"Our crowd isn't really into rock n' roll," explains Grad House manager Bob Bagg. "The atmosphere here is informal, to be sure. But it is also structured and professional to some extent. Most of our patrons are serious students and our facilities are designed to their needs. We like to keep things calm and sophisticated."

What this means, of course, is that the Grad House, Halifax's only full-scale watering hole specifically designed for students in M.A. and doctoral programs, likes to keep the rowdies at bay. Opened in 1975 by the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students, the Grad House was supposed to be a "social centre for the university's 1400 or so graduate students." Membership in the club was free to students who paid a Graduate Association fee. "The most tangible thing they got for their student fees was access to the club as long as they were doing graduate work," Bagg says.

But though the Grad House restricts membership, it is not impossible for the Everyman to find his way in. The club allows its members one guest per visit; and

limited numbers of special associate memberships are available to ex-students, undergraduates and faculty, among others. "We don't like to advertise that we're open to just anybody. This is a private club, after all. But we do entertain a regular number of non-members. Non-members don't have to meet any specific set of standards. Anyone can apply for a special membership," Bagg says.

But the question is, why would anybody want to belong to a club that is, by every standard, well...snooty, when there are so many public beer halls around. The answer is, simply, you can't beat the Grad House's prices on booze and food. It is, if not the cheapest place in town to drink, among the top three. The Grad House is one perpetual Happy Hour!

Also, there's no better place for weary Friday night barhoppers to cool down. Located in the heart of Dalhousie campus, the Grad House promises patrons a quiet, ever-so-sophisticated evening. The third floor is a non-smoking lounge, complete with literature, reference books, most of Canada's major dailies and weeklies, and 24 other publications from assorted countries. Every Monday night in the television room on the second floor the House shows videotapes of Hollywood features and little-known foreign and domestic films. Occasionally, Bagg invites jazz or folk musicians to play for the crowd. "We really want to maintain the Grad House as a focal point of the Dalhousie graduate student's life," he says.

Whatever the case, this little club with its highbrow ambience could give going back to school a whole new meaning. C

sons, Eric and Bob, work there as waiters. Speaking of his total staff of 16, Grant says simply, "They never leave."

At busy lunchtimes, when the Midtown serves hundreds of meals over a couple of hours — and many more hundreds of beers — the waiters and kitchen help total ten, including Grant. He's cagey about both his volume of sales and the precautions he takes to make sure the draught is up to scratch: "If I told you, then everyone would know."

What he doesn't mind everyone knowing is that he, and his wife Jean, and his four sons, and his daughter, are as crazy about sports as some of his customers are

about draught beer. (Grant, who drinks coffee from tavern glasses, never touches beer.) "I guess I talked so much about sports," he told Pat Connolly, "that I captured them all, one by one, beginning with Jean." That was in '78. Connolly figured that for eight years Grant has been taking \$10,000 a year out of the Midtown's profits to sponsor amateur teams. By now, Grant's total backing of assorted fastball, softball, basketball, hockey and lacrosse teams may well amount to \$150,000. All his boys are fine athletes.

Disdaining potato-peeling machines, Grant peels Midtown spuds by hand. Connolly

said he was "up to his neck in softballs, basketballs, pucks and potatoes;" and now, in '84, Grant is up to his ears in trophies. Noticing my taking notes on trophies in the Midtown's window, he followed me outside. Now Grant is not a boastful man. Indeed, when a photographer shows up to take a shot of some championship team he's sponsored, "I always hide behind a tree somewhere." Still, he could not resist letting it slip that, "I got about a hundred more trophies at home." He pointed to his new Mercury stationwagon, which can seat an entire fastball team, and explained that he'd driven his previous stationwagon

100,000 miles in just two years, mostly to cart players to games around the Maritimes.

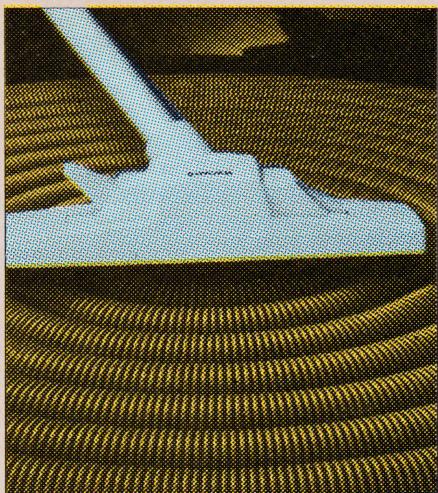
But despite his fanatical devotion to amateur sports, the Midtown does not make non-jocks uncomfortable. Its regular clientele includes the most mixed bag of tipplers in the city: Construction workers, vice-presidents, soldiers, sailors, students, hairdressers, secretaries, rich persons, poor persons, beggar persons, thieves. The Midtown boasts checked shirts and three-piece suits, sweatshirts and spike heels, hard hats and soft shoulders.

Robert Marcellus used to come to Halifax every spring to oversee what's now the Festival of Music, and he always reported to the Midtown. "He called it 'the Midtown Tap,'" festival promoter Chris Wilcox recalled, "and he declared it the official tavern of the Scotia Chamber Players." Marcellus was the greatest North American classical clarinettist of the mid-20th century. He was also a man who well knew that although there is a time for music there is also a time for cheap food, good talk, and draught beer. He had taste.

A Midtown regular moved to Calgary, decided to get married, sent wedding invitations to his drinking buddies back home. They couldn't afford to go but they took photos of one another in the Midtown, tape-recorded their greetings, best wishes and anecdotes, and then sent to the bride and groom an audio-visual record of a Halifax party to celebrate a Calgary wedding. This was done in the true Midtown spirit. That spirit was somewhat immortalized by one beer-drinking bard who penned a tribute to the Midtown and gave it to Doug Grant. The first lines went like this:

*The Midtown Tavern is
the place to meet
Whether you're young
or old
If you're lucky enough to
find a seat —
It's easier finding gold....*

The author may not be the greatest North American poet of the mid-20th century but, like Robert Marcellus, he knows a good tavern when he sees it, and he's loyal to the good, old Midtown Tap. C



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Learning your ABCs the French way

For the first time anywhere in Halifax, a few hard-working Grade 7 students will enter a French immersion junior high school program this year. They're the inheritors of a hugely successful elementary immersion program begun in 1977.

by Alec Bruce

When a couple of hundred Halifax kids enter Fairview Junior High School's Grade 7 class this month they will study reading, writing and arithmetic like thousands of other kids in schools all over the city. But unlike their peers, about 50 Fairview sophomores will learn their lessons at least 40 per cent of the time exclusively in French. Thanks to the huge success over the past seven years of the Halifax City School Board's elementary French studies program, French immersion has finally reached the junior high school level.

"The program has proven to be an acceptable alternative," says the School Board's assistant director of education, Gerald Mosher. "People here are interested in having their children educated in this way. We are now committed to preserving the program through to Grade 9 at the Fairview school."

French immersion began in Halifax as little more than an experiment in 1977. A group of parents decided they wanted their youngsters to become fluent in Canada's two official languages, and presented their case to the School Board. At the time, Halifax was the only provincial capital that did not have an immersion program. "I felt we should definitely support a program like this," recalls then director of education, Arthur Conrad. "The parents were very persuasive. They worked together better than most home and school associations I've come across."

The first two primary classes began



Mosher: In charge of "an acceptable alternative."

at the Chebucto bungalow school. The following year, two more classes were added. By 1979, the program outgrew the building and French immersion moved to the Beaufort School on LeMarchant St. Over the next two years, the program expanded to Burton Ettinger and St. Catherine's schools. This year, the program boasts 792 students in 32 classes spread out over four schools (including Fairview Junior High).

In fact, if there was *any* problem, it was the difficulty of making room for the flood of new applicants each year. "In the beginning, we found it hard to find classroom space for all the students," says Pauline Field, former program supervisor. "It's fair to say we didn't expect the response we got."

Nevertheless, the program remained open to everyone without any process of selection to weed out parents who might not be willing or able to devote the time necessary to helping their kids adjust to French schooling in a largely English-speaking part of the country. "We found that people applying to the program were highly motivated to begin with," says Arthur Conrad. "And their children tended to be the same. And we had a good organization to deal with any problems."

"Children, in general, tend to have a better ability to respond to new learning environments than adults," adds Pauline Field. "We quickly discovered the education these children were receiving was as good as, if not better than, the education in the

English-speaking schools."

Students in the program, unlike those in the regular schools, spend their primary year mastering the French language. By Grade 3, when the kids are more or less fluent, the curriculum begins to mirror regular schooling. Students learn their ABCs, their numbers, a bit of science and history. But they spend very little time actually learning English. "By the middle elementary grades, the children are spending no more than a couple of hours each day on English," Field says. "We find they have a better ability to analyse the rules of language than strictly English-schooled students." The kids do seem to be slower in language spelling than average, but Field says they usually catch up by the time they're in Grade 4 or 5.

Because the program is still not part of the Halifax School Board's core curriculum, the Board has to approve separate funding for it each year. And that has caused some grumbling among area residents. "French immersion is not a mandatory program," says Gerald Mosher. "There have been people over the years who have complained about the cost. But the Board has resisted this pressure, and has never indicated it will not support the program." Mosher attributes any sour grapes to misunderstanding and the current economic climate. "When people complain about where their tax money goes, they're forgetting that taxes pay for practically every public service. And that includes all forms of public education." At present, taxpayers support the program's 40-odd resource teachers, staff, library assistants, teacher's aids and the costs of transporting the children to the schools.

Pauline Field adds that while the program initially attracted parents with professional and business backgrounds largely from the city's south end, it now attracts parents from low and middle income areas as well as many immigrant families. "We really are a little United Nations now," she says.

Where seven years ago Halifax had no such thing as French language immersion schooling, this city is now the largest centre for this type of education in the Atlantic Provinces. Centres in Antigonish and Cape Breton support small programs. And this year, a class in Port Hawkesbury is scheduled to begin. But as Pauline Field says Halifax is clearly the leader; and if things go on the way they have over the last few years, French immersion will continue to grow. "I'm still getting calls from people here who want to know how much they have to pay to make their kids bilingual," she says. "They really can't believe all this is free."

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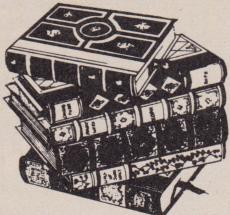
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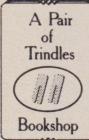


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DON ROBINSON



Robert Doyle may be outspoken, independent and even a little cantankerous at times. But his methods have made Dalhousie's costume studies program one of the most successful of its kind in Canada. And it's a safe bet none of his graduates will ever have much trouble finding work.

by Glen Walton

Anyone who spends a lot of time watching live theatre knows the success or failure of any performance depends nearly as much on how well the costumes fit the actors as on how well the actors fit their parts. That may sound absurd to the novice Thespian. After all, how can a beautiful costume, designed to reveal the playwright's, director's and even the actor's intentions can lift a performance to greatness.

That, at least, is the theory of costume designer Robert Doyle whose costume studies program at Dalhousie University in Halifax has opened doors for numerous burgeoning designers in regional, national and international theatre as well as the fashion world. Only the National Theatre School's costume program enjoys as high a reputation as Dal Theatre's in all of Canada. And only the National Theatre School has a better job placement record for graduating students.

What's his secret of success? Unlike the usual liberal arts based programs at Dalhousie, the costume studies program teaches students to turn their craft into a marketable skill: Something that Doyle considers essential in the difficult and highly competitive field of theatrical design. Students follow a rigorous regimen something like on-the-spot vocational training. Graduates of the program get diplomas instead of degrees.

Successful applicants are not required to take such basic requirements as English in their first year. Instead, they enter the world of sewing machines, cutting tables and fabrics. And because the program is administratively attached to Dalhousie's theatre department, students also work on various school productions. The basic course is two years of full-time study (with a third year for those

who wish to specialize in theatrical design), and includes training in corset making, pattern design, draping and tailoring as well as courses in the history of costume and decoration. Students have also worked on outside projects such as the Nova Scotia Gilbert and Sullivan Society's production of the *Pirates of Penzance* last spring. The women's costumes in that show attracted audience applause at every performance. The program is a heady, exciting and laborious environment for the students — an environment for which Doyle himself is chiefly responsible.

He had long seen a need in Canadian theatre for trained costume artists when, already a highly praised designer at the Neptune after coming to the Maritimes in the early sixties, he was asked by then Dalhousie theatre department chair Lionel Lawrence to become the department's artist-in-residence. That was in the mid-seventies. Doyle then asked the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design to start up a costume design program; then, working with Lawrence, he set up the program at Dalhousie despite the Maritime Provinces' Higher Education Commission refusal to endorse the new course for funding. Today, despite a spectacularly successful trial period and that ultimate academic honour, tenure for Doyle at Dalhousie, the university still has to fund costume studies out of its own pocket.

Occasionally, Doyle's energy and enthusiasm gets him into hot water with his faculty colleagues who view his entrepreneurial daring with suspicion, or with students unused to the discipline of the theatre. "Bob really makes this program," says one student who, in a lower voice, recalls a petition presented a few years ago by students to the university protesting Doyle's teaching methods. But Doyle remains unfazed. "Every class is different," he shrugs, ascribing any problems between he and his students to "bad chemistry." And, in fact, most of his students are enthusiastic about his teaching abilities. "He's an artist," one insists, adding that "few teachers give as much as Bob." Perhaps the program is a paradigm of life in the theatre: It's a hard-knock life, but those who make Doyle's grades get the jobs.

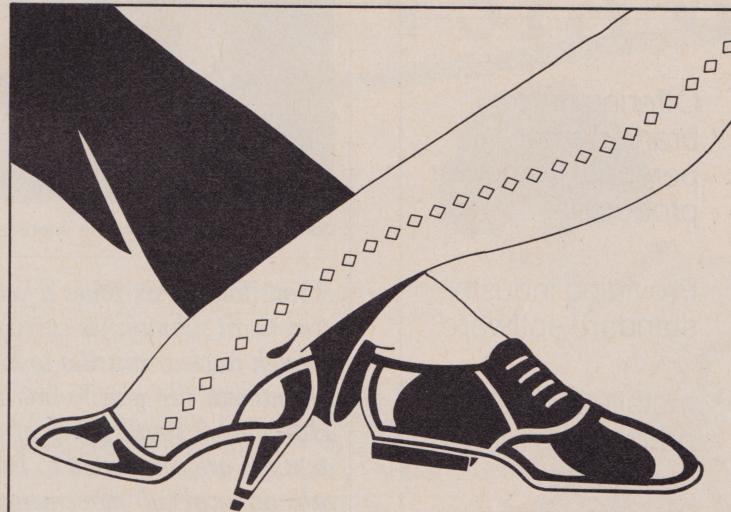
The hours for Doyle's students are long; and advancement is by no means automatic. Twenty-five first year students are trimmed to 15 in the second year, while usually only five make it to the advanced third year. Those who stick it out benefit enormously from Doyle's curiosity and insatiable interest in all things having to do with costuming. He insists, beyond such technical things as knowing what a train is or how to move in a gothic garment, his students understand the concept of theatrical design. A strong believer in designer-director-scenographer collaboration, Doyle's course embraces esthetics. His students

must understand the epochs and philosophy of costume art. TV series such as Kenneth Clark's *Civilization* are a regular part of his curriculum. "The artist must be articulate," insists Doyle.

Fringe benefits for his class abound: This spring, he and his class travelled to the costume mecca of the world, New York City. They toured the costume warehouses of the Metropolitan Opera and spoke with the designer for the hit Broadway show *La Cage aux Folles*. Doyle's latest project is his acquisition of 1,800 slides depicting the history of western costume design. The university is balking at picking up the tab, but Doyle, in typical fashion, may pay for the collection out of his own pocket.

As for the future, Doyle is supported by first-rate staffers including head of wardrobe Lynn Sorge, and head seamstress Rhea Bowen. Should he ever leave, the program would flourish in spite of him. In any case, the Maritimes don't seem to be about to lose their adopted prodigal son. An enthusiastic and outspoken supporter of the region's creative potential, he has restored and now lives in an elegant house on rejuvenated Hollis Street in Halifax. Nevertheless, he is in an enviable position. He can walk into any major theatre in Canada, design costumes and be sure the resident costumers will follow his instructions to the letter. They should. "I trained them," he says. **C**

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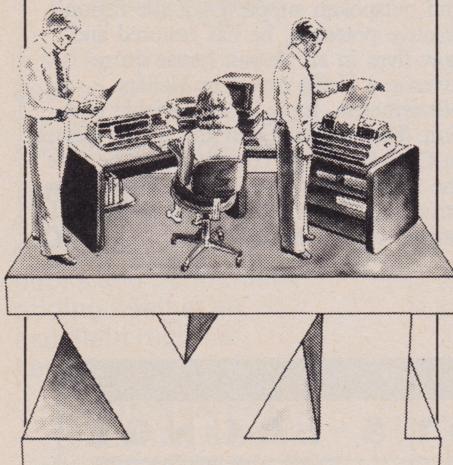
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The Subs are coming!



John and Valerie Osborne scanning the Harbour for missile-bearing submarines.

About four to six times a year, American submarines carrying enough nuclear missiles to blow up a continent slip quietly into Halifax Harbour. A small group of peace activists are committed to keeping tabs on local sub movements.

by Ken Burke

Each and every day, John and Valerie Osborne, middle-aged Dartmouth area residents, wait for the word. So does Ian Cook, a young skinheaded kitchen cleaner; and engineering student Cathy McDonald; and Masters of Education student Jim McCalla Smith. They wait for the word that comes only occasionally, but when it does, they come together in a mad rush of activity, sacrificing jobs, school and homelife. The word comes in the form of a phone message, and its content is simple: "A nuclear missile-bearing submarine has just entered Halifax Harbour."

The Osbornes, Cook, McDonald, Smith and several other metro dwellers belong to the Halifax-Dartmouth Sub-watch Committee, a group dedicated to identifying American submarines carrying nuclear warheads in the harbour, and organizing anti-nuke demonstrations at a moment's notice. "When we began in 1982," explains committee member and homemaker Valerie Osborne, "we were

a sub-committee of the Nova Scotia Coalition against Nuclear War." When the coalition, an umbrella organization for such varied groups as the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, OXFAM, YWCA and Project Ploughshares, disbanded in late 1983, members decided to continue with the Sub-watch Committee. The role of the committee would be to monitor the Harbour and focus the energies of the area's peace movement on sub movements.

According to the committee, between four and six times a year a sleek, black American submarine of the Lafayette class slips unannounced into the Harbour to dock at CFB Shearwater either before or after its tour of duty in the North Atlantic. Besides a crew of sailors eager for shore leave, some of these subs carry up to 16 Trident nuclear missiles deep within their hulls. The warheads in one of these missiles can hit eight targets. Each warhead has a destructive force five times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

The central issue for the Sub-watch Committee is what it sees as an essential contradiction, with these American subs, in Canada's policy towards nuclear weapons. According to a paper the Prime Minister's office recently sent to the Osbornes entitled *Background Notes on Canada's Security Policy*, Canada "will not... allow the transport or storage of nuclear weapons in Canadian waters."

CITYSTYLE

The paper also states, however, that Canada "respects the policy of the United States of America to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons on their warships."

"We want to show how the image of Canada as a non-nuclear state is a fallacy," says committee member Cathy McDonald. "Our policy of not having nuclear weapons in Canada means nothing. We're just like an American port."

The U.S. Consul-general in Halifax, Lawrence R. Raicht, says there is no tactic of evasion involved in the U.S. position. "We don't feel it is useful to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear missiles," he says. "We don't confirm or deny it in the United States or elsewhere for security reasons."

"As part of our defense policy there are no first-strike weapons on Canadian soil," says Major Clare, information officer at Shearwater. But when asked why the Department of National Defense always docks the American subs at Shearwater, Clare said, "We don't allow ships carrying nuclear weapons in the upper harbour. As a matter of courtesy we keep them here, to keep the local populace happy." Clare added that berthing the subs is part of Canada's commitment to NATO.

John Osborne, who is an engineer for the N.S. Research Foundation, doesn't agree. "These subs don't have to be here for our defense," he says. "They're part of the nuclear overkill. Docking these subs here is no more a part of NATO commitments than testing the cruise missile is."

Monitoring incoming American subs is a daunting task. Since movements of nuclear-armed subs are kept secret for security reasons, no advance warning is given before the subs actually arrive in port. When they do arrive, they are usually docked in an ultra-secure berth in Shearwater, away from probing eyes, making the job of identification and issuing a "sub-alert" that much more difficult.

But the committee has used a variety of identification methods in the past that have proven successful, from driving past the base every day in hopes of spotting the ominous black shapes in dock to using a student, employed for the summer on McNab's Island, watching the harbour mouth. But neither method was as effective as their current one. "Someone at Shearwater is watching for us right now," says Valerie Osborne. When a ship arrives, the committee meets to look up its name in *Jane's Fighting Ships* to learn if it carries nuclear missiles. If it does, the committee spends the next few days frantically organizing a demonstration before the sub leaves port. Most of these subs stay in port for only two or three days.

Because it is impossible for the com-

mittee to give advanced warning of incoming subs, demonstrations routinely attract crowds of 100 or 200 people. But despite the small turnouts, John Osborne believes the demonstrations have an effect. "If you don't do anything," he says, "the media won't give you any coverage. Even a small demonstration is newsworthy."

Even the occasional intrusion of demonstrations by a local Marxist-Leninist group doesn't upset the Committee. "We're used to them," grins Valerie Osborne. But perhaps the most serious obstacle facing the committee is its apparent lack of popular support in this area. Approximately one-quarter of metro area residents depend directly on

the Department of National Defense for their livelihood. Often, response to the committee's activities are hostile. "Most people are pleased to know that the U.S. Navy maintains these ships to defend the North Atlantic coast," says U.S. Consul Raicht. This past May, after the *Halifax Daily News* ran several sympathetic articles on the protesters, the great majority of phone calls to the paper were supportive of the subs' presence in the Harbour.

"Halifax people sometimes take their involvement with the military here too seriously," says one unidentified Committee member. "I wish they could see how far wrong we've gone with nuclear arms."

C

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CITYSTYLE

Just a phone call away

by Alec Bruce

The Halifax Helpline Centre sits in one of the backyard portables of the Volunteer Bureau at the corner of Oxford and Coburg streets like a haunted mobile home. When the door is shut, you can almost imagine yourself stranded in some remote, arctic outpost. In a corner stands a makeshift pantry with most of the trappings of self-sufficiency: Coffee, tea, canned goods, dry goods and a first aid kit. On the walls hang city maps, schedules, lists, time sheets, posters and one curious homemade collage of colorful shapes and slogans urging you to "hang in there." Over the two work stations hangs a tiny, frosted-glass window utterly useless except as a source of some natural light. If it weren't for the persistent flickering of the phone lights, you'd almost swear there wasn't a soul for miles around.

But tonight, the summer sun is shining gloriously, and Dan and Gloria have propped open the Centre's door. "It's a beautiful evening out and that sometimes makes a difference," smiles Gloria. "We don't usually get many calls on nights like this." And so Dan and Gloria enjoy a rare tea and cookie break and begin to reminisce about the Centre, their experiences here, and what first prompted them to become telephone lineworkers for Metro's only

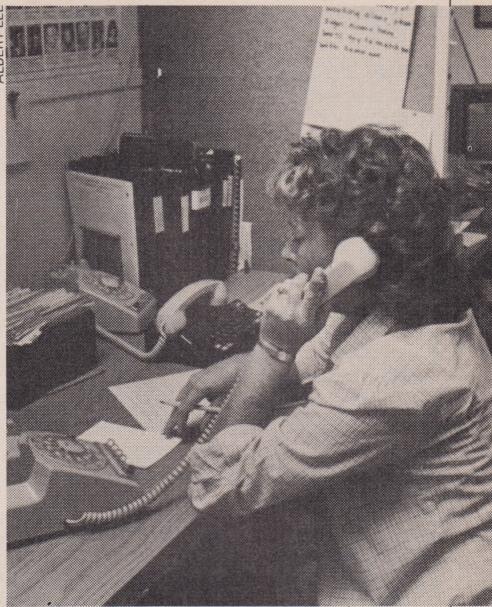
round-the-clock out-reach service for the down-hearted, the lonely and the lost.

"Sometimes you ask yourself why you do this week after week," says Gloria. "Sometimes you get really depressed." "Sometimes you know you've got someone on the line who is a chronic case and you know you really can't do anything about it...you can't do anything for him," adds Dan. "But then," says Gloria, "it also makes you glad of your own ability to cope with life...and there are times when you're absolutely sure you're doing some good."

The Halifax Helpline Centre has been active since 1969 serving Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and some outlying parts of Halifax County. It began as the community service branch of the Volunteer Bureau, an organization dedicated to promoting volunteerism in society and finding positions for able volunteers. In the early days, the Helpline received roughly 200 calls a month. Now it gets more than 2,000 calls a month. "I don't think that the increase has much to do with more people out there becoming troubled," says Bev Gaugin, the Centre's volunteer staff coordinator. "I think it has more to do with people becoming more aware of what we do here."

With roughly 100 volunteers manning three phone lines in four-hour shifts 24 hours a day, the Centre is able to put any caller in touch with one of 345 community services in the metro area ranging from Alcoholics Anonymous to the Victoria General's VD clinic. The Centre is funded by Halifax and Dartmouth Cities, Halifax County, Bedford, the United Way and the Protestant Youth Foundation. A three person staff

ALBERT LEE



On call at Halifax Helpline

is responsible for administration, public relations, fund raising and general housekeeping. But the centre relies heavily on its volunteers. "We really believe in the volunteer ethic here," Gaugin says. "Our volunteers man the phones, deal with the day to day problems of listening to and soothing agitated callers, and making the connection with various other agencies."

Gloria and Dan are engaged to be married, and they work the lines as a couple. Both work for the Department of National Defence, and after a hard day, they often don't feel like spending their evening listening to troubled souls. "The real problems begin when you discover you can't wind down when you get home," says Gloria. "Sometimes

Need help? . . .

Only a few of the 345 community services the Helpline Centre can put you in touch with:

Alcoholics Anonymous — P.O. Box 8162, Station A, Halifax, N.S. B3K 5L9. Phone: 422-5875.

Atlantic Child Guidance Centre — 1464 Tower Rd., Halifax, N.S. B3M 4L4. Phone: 422-1611. A community-based outpatient mental health service dedicated to helping troubled children and their families.

Bethany Home — 980 Tower Rd., Halifax, N.S. B3H 2Y4. Phone: 422-5900. Home for unwed mothers.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Dartmouth-Halifax — P.O. Box 307, 8 Ochterloney St., Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 3Y5. Phone: 463-2232.

Bryony House — P.O. Box 3453, Halifax, N.S. B3J 3J1. Phone: 423-4616 (office); 422-7650 (crisis line). Shelter for

emotionally and/or physically battered women and their children.

Canadian Human Rights Commission — Lord Nelson Arcade, Suite 212, 5675 Spring Garden Road, Halifax, N.S. B3J 3J2. Phone: 426-8380.

Canadian Mental Health Association — Dartmouth Branch, 73 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 2N7. Phone: 463-2187.

Canadian Red Cross Society — Halifax Branch, 1940 Gottingen St., Halifax, N.S. B3J 2H2. Phone: 423-9181.

Dalhousie Legal Aid Service — 5557 Cunard St., Halifax, N.S. B3K 1C5. Phone: 423-8105.

Family S.O.S. — 5614 Fenwick St., Halifax, N.S. B3H 1P9. Phone: 423-4380. Any parent in a difficult or stressful situation may be referred through family doctor or social worker. Parent-aid support service.

Gay Alliance for Equality — P.O. Box 3611, South Station, Halifax, N.S. B3J 3K6. Phone: 429-4294.

Halifax Adult Service Centre — 3430 Prescott St., Halifax, N.S. B3K 4Y4. Phone: 454-7387. A vocational training program for mentally retarded adults.

Halifax Regional Welfare Rights Organization — 2164 Gottingen St., Halifax, N.S. B3K 3B4. Phone: 423-2597 or 422-6424. Established to serve the disadvantaged families and individuals in the area.

Homes for Independent Living — 2505 Oxford St., Halifax, N.S. B3L 2T5. Phone: 422-8268. A transitional group home for physically disabled adults whose concern is to promote their own independence.

Hope Cottage — 2435 Brunswick St., Halifax, N.S. B3K 2Z4. Phone: 429-7968. Hope Cottage helps meet the needs of homeless men in Halifax by the provision of food, emergency clothing and referral to overnight accommodations.

Mental Health Halifax — 5867 Spring Garden Rd., Halifax, N.S. B3H 1Y2. Phone: 422-3087.

you think you're going to wake up the next day and recognize some name in the obituaries." But they're nonetheless committed to the Centre. "I think what keeps you coming in," explains Gloria, "is the question: What if it were me or my dad or mom needing help? You really have to like people and want to help them."

Bev Gaugin agrees a lineworker must be a very special person. "We look for dependability, maturity, emotional stability, warmth and an ability to remain sympathetic with, yet detached from, callers in our volunteers," she says. The Centre puts prospective lineworkers through a rigorous series of tests and a training program before allowing them to actually man the phones. All volunteers must be over 19 years of age and they must come to the Centre bearing references. They attend a weekend human relations course on such weighty subjects as listening and communications skills, value clarification, role playing and general administration. The most important thing the Centre teaches lineworkers is open-mindedness. "It is very important that all the volunteers remain non-judgemental," Gaugin says. "They must understand they are only the people at one end of a phone call. They can't possibly know what's going on in a caller's mind."

"Being open-minded is as important as being detached from callers," says Gloria. "You have to remain detached in order to preserve your own sanity. But you have to be open-minded in order to help someone in need."

"Many lineworkers get burned out simply because they get too involved... make too many judgements... tortured because they can't make things perfect or change a caller's mind about something," adds Dan.

But according to Gloria there are some calls you simply can't shrug off. "The suicide threats... the ones you're absolutely sure about can be devastating," she says.

Gaugin says the Centre receives roughly 100 suicide threats a year and for the most part, there's really nothing a lineworker can do about these. "There's really no way of knowing who is serious and who is just looking for some attention," she says. "We teach our volunteers to take every call seriously."

Gloria remembers her first suicide threat at the end of her first solo shift over six years ago. Over the years she's received about ten more, but, she says, you never really get used to them. "You feel really lost... as if there's nothing you can do after all is said and done." Part of the frustration stems from the fact the Centre doesn't have a proper tracing system plugged into the various police departments in the area. "We don't have a locking device that can

locate a call... If we need anything, we really need that very badly. We could locate a call in minutes and get the proper help."

But the serious suicide threats are actually only a small minority of the calls the Centre receives in a given month. And the sheer variety of complaints, problems, needs and wants coming from callers makes it impossible to say exactly what type of people the Centre helps. "What kind of calls do we usually get? You name it, we get it," Gaugin says.

Gloria remembers the time she was occupied with a suicide threat and had to put the caller on hold to deal with another caller who wanted to complain about the high price of bananas. "We

get ladies with cats up trees; people who simply want information about something. Sometimes you go from the sublime to the ridiculous," she says.

What really drives a lineworker crazy, says Dan, are the prank or obscene calls. "You may spend hours with one caller on some very serious matter only to discover they're pulling your leg."

For the most part, however, lineworkers learn to tell whether or not a caller is legitimately concerned about something. "The importance of this Centre," Gaugin says, "is that we're a confidential service. You don't have to give your name. Often we're the first step for someone seeking professional help."

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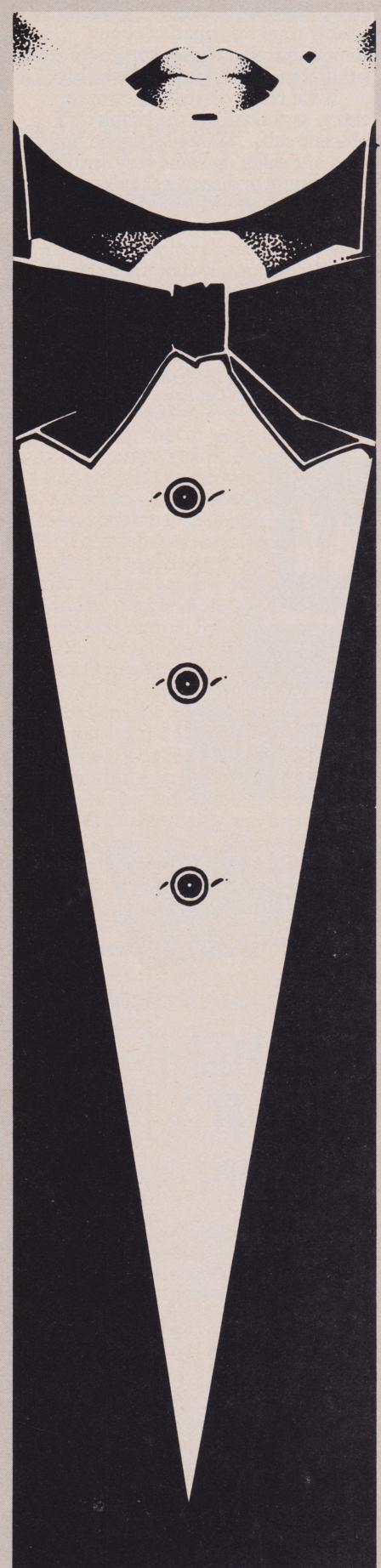
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ATLANTIC INSIGHT, SEPTEMBER 1984



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Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Sept. 14-Nov. 4. *From The Heart.* A selection of 297 artifacts organized by the National Museum of Man from the collection of the Museum's Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Made possible by the generous assistance of The Allstate Foundation of Canada. 6152 Coburg Road, 424-7542. Hours: Mon., Tues., Wed., Fri., Sat., 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Sun., 12 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Dalhousie Art Gallery. Continuing to September 30. *The Non-Figurative Artists' Association.* This exhibition focuses on the development of abstract painting in Montreal in the late 1950s, as reflected in the work of members of the Non-Figurative Artists' Association 1955-1961. Included in this exhibition are works by Fernand Leduc, Guido Molinari, Paterson Ewen and others. Organized by Sir George Williams Art Galleries with the assistance of the National Museums Corporation of Canada.

Ben Shahn: Photographs. Fifty photographic works by American artist Ben Shahn, taken in the late 1930s for the Farm Service Administration. Organized and circulated by the University of Southern Maine. 6101 University Ave., Hours: Tues. - Fri., 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sat. and Sun., 1-5 p.m.

Dartmouth Heritage Museum. Aug. 27-Sept. 16: Oil paintings by Roger Noughart. Sept. 17-Oct. 7: *Seas* — Mixed media group of painters. 100 Wyse Road. For information call 421-2300. Hours: Mon.-Fri., 9-9; Sat. 9-5; Sun., 2-5.

Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery. Continuing to September 16. Downstairs, *Woven Forms: Sculptural Figures* by Dawn McNutt, Dartmouth. Upstairs, *Cancelled Icons*, jewelry by Pamela Ritchie, Halifax. Sept. 21-Oct. 14, Downstairs and Upstairs, *The Hand Holding the Brush: Self Portraits by Canadian Artists.* Courtesy London Regional Art Gallery. Bedford Highway, 443-4450. Hours: Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Tues. till 9 p.m.; Sat. and Sun. 12-5 p.m.

TUNS, School of Architecture Gallery. Through September. *ARS Sacra '84 Celebration.* Exhibition of visual arts in commemoration of the visit of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Halifax. Spring Garden Road. Hours:

Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. For information call 429-8300.

Anna Leonowens Gallery (N.S. College of Art & Design). Sept. 4-14.

Gallery I: Walter and Elaine Ostrom - *Flowers - a Collaboration.* Gallery II:

Judith Mann - drawings and paintings.

Gallery III: Beatty Popescu - installation. Sept. 18-Oct. 12. Gallery I: *Faculty Collections Exhibition:* Organized by Riduan Tomkins. Sept. 24-29. Gallery II: David Zeiset - recent work. 1891 Granville Street. Hours: Tues. - Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Thurs. 11 a.m.- 9 p.m.

MOVIES

Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. Dalhousie Arts Centre. Travelogue Film, Sept. 11: *Egypt: Open Borders*, begins at 8 p.m. Travelogue Film, Sept. 26: *Europe by Train.* Sept. 30, *Fanny and Alexander.*

Wormwood's Dog and Monkey Cinema. To Sept. 3: *That Sinking Feeling*, directed by Bill Forsyth, Scotland. A group of unemployed Glasgow youths down on their luck decide to steal several hundred stainless steel sinks. Sept. 1 & 2: *Taxi Driver*, directed by Martin Scorsese, U.S.A. Sept. 4-6: *A Hard Day's Night*, directed by Richard Lester, Great Britain. Lester introduced the real Beatles in the best movie musical of the decade. Sept. 5: *Flamenco at 5:15*, directed by Cynthia Scott. Sept. 6-9: *Seven Samurai*, directed by Akira Kurosawa, Japan. A village of farmers who are being terrorized by bandits decide to hire a samurai to fight for them. They find an old samurai who in turn finds six others willing to follow him. Many fights follow and the village is saved. Sept. 7-9: *Hookers on Davie*, directed by Janis Cole and Holly Dale, Canada. Using radio mikes and a hidden camera, Janis Cole and Holly Dale have filmed eight male and female prostitutes who work the so-called "prostitution capital of Canada," a tree-lined residential street in Vancouver which has become a drive-in brothel with up to 150 prostitutes active at any one time. Sept. 7-13: *La Balance*, directed by Bob Swain, France. This film won three French Oscars. Sept. 7-20: *The Wars*, directed by Robin Phillips, Canada. Taken from Timothy Findley's award-winning novel, the film, like the book, presents fragmented images of The Great War as grotesque and absurd.

Sept. 12: *Dream of a Free Country*,

directed by Kathleen Shannon and Ginny Stikeman. This film is about the women of Nicaragua who helped overthrow the Somoza dictatorship in 1979 and who are continuing the struggle for social and political change. Sept. 13-16: *Popeye*, Directed by Robert Altman, U.S.A. Sept. 19: *My Urban Garden*, directed by Polly Bennell. This film shows that lack of space and poor soil quality need not be obstacles to a successful garden. It will appeal to both novice and experienced gardeners. Sept. 21-23: *Born in Flames*, directed by Lizzie Borden, U.S.A. This film is set in the future in New York City, ten years after the Social Democratic War of Liberation. The Social Democratic Party that women had supported has not fulfilled its promises. Sept. 21-27: *Betrayal*, directed by David Jones, Great Britain. Sept. 28-30: *The Falls*, directed by Peter Greenaway, Great Britain. A violent unknown event (VUE) has struck the world, leaving behind some 19 million survivors, of whom the film briefly catalogues 92 case histories, chosen on the apparently random basis that their surnames all begin with the letters "fall." To check show times and prices, call 422-3700.

IN CONCERT

Rebecca Cohn Auditorium. The National Ballet will be appearing at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium from Sept. 19 through 22.



CLUB DATES

Teddy's. Piano Bar at Delta Barrington Hotel. Continuing to Sept. 15: **Kim Bishop.** Hours: Mon.-Sat., 9 p.m.-1 a.m. Happy hour 5-7 p.m. **The Village Gate.** 534 Windmill Road, Dartmouth. Sept. 3-8: *The Customers*; Sept. 10-15: *Under Cover*;

Sept. 17-22: *Crazy Jane*; Sept. 24-29: *Tense*. Hours: Mon.-Wed., 10 a.m.-11 p.m.; Thurs.-Sat., 10 a.m.-12:30 a.m. **Privateers' Warehouse.** Historic Properties. Sept. 3-8: Middle Deck: *Little Al and the Survivors*, Lower Deck: *Notework*; Sept. 10-15: Middle Deck: *Amos Garrett*; Sept. 17-22: Middle Deck: *Mark Haines and the Zippers*. Hours: Middle Deck, 11-2:30 a.m. Lower Deck, 11:30-12:30 a.m. **Ladies' Beverage Room.** 5675 Spring Garden Road. Sept. 3-8: *Terry Kelly*; Sept. 10-15: *Garrison Brothers*; Sept. 17-22: *McGinty*; Sept. 24-29: *Tony Quinn*. Hours: Mon.-Wed., 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Thurs.-Sat., 11 a.m.-12:30 a.m.

The Network Lounge, 1546 Dresden Row. Sept. 10-15: *The White* — a live musical tribute to Led Zeppelin. Hours: Mon.-Sat. till 2 a.m.

SPORTS

The Nova Scotia Lawn Bowling Association will have lawn bowling events scheduled on Sept. 22 or 23 during the Joseph Howe Festival Games, St. Mary's LBC, Halifax. Sept. 1-3: Provincial Senior Women's B Soccer Championship, Halifax. **Metro Centre.** Sept. 1. Canada Cup Hockey — Team U.S.A. versus Team Sweden. Game starts at 5 p.m.

meridian, n. the highest point of power, prosperity, splendour.

etc; zenith; apex; culmination.

meridian, n. a treasure house of interior design, fine artisan wares, designer fashion, jewellery and accessories; an avant garde showcase presenting the work of 29 of Nova Scotia's finest designer/makers. **meridian, n.** the middle period of one's life, regarded as the highest point of health, vigor, etc.; prime.

meridian, n. a gracious home alive with colour, texture and line; a designer's delight offering inspiration, ideas and items to decorate you, your home, your way of life. **meridian, n.** a place or situation with its own distinctive character; distinctive character. **meridian, n.** the designer/maker store, located at The Brewery Market, 429-3932. Mon., Tues., Wed., Sat. 9:30-5:30 Thurs. and Fri. 9:30-9:00. Come create with us!

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION IT'S ADVERTISING

New is not necessarily better



By Donald Crowdus

There's a philosophical storm swirling around a house that stands kitty-corner across from the Public Gardens in Halifax. It's just a lonely, old Victorian house, but it is the subject — and catalyst — of a debate that has involved public officials, citizens' action groups, civic engineers, historians, students, mothers, children, lovers of old buildings and lovers of new ones.

The house is the Hart House, proposed for keeping as part of an historic streetscape, but scheduled for demolition to make way for highrise condominium apartments.

It has been said that there are two kinds of fools. One kind thinks that because something is old, it is good; and the other thinks that because something is new, it is better. Surely, none of us wants to see St. Paul's Church or Government House go in the name of "progress." And we certainly wouldn't say our current highway system is *not* an improvement on the old one. In fact, most of us would agree with the White Knight of *Alice in Wonderland* that the art of riding is keeping your balance. How is it, then, that we seem to have lost sight of this lesson over the Hart House. One reason is that this issue is more than mere dialectic: Powerful developers *want* the Hart property, and they're willing to pay for their prize. Debate and public hearings have become extraordinarily confrontational, cleaved into two camps of those who want to "preserve" and those who want to "develop."

But in spite of the furor, the issues are reasonably clear and important to enumerate: Does the integrity of our famed Public Gardens stop at an iron fence? Are new buildings always a greater good than the old ones they replace? Can heritage values be settled by simple arithmetic? Do buildings stand or fall on individual considerations, or do streetscapes and historical landmarks matter to this old city?

The fact is that the city has set limits for the size and height of new buildings in the Gardens area, but at municipal hearings last year it became apparent the city and its planners were more than willing to reverse previous zoning decisions in favour of

the new luxury apartments. The actors in this should all remember Calpurnia, Caesar's wife, who had not only to be virtuous, but had to be *seen* as being virtuous. The chilling result of Watergate in the mid-Seventies was an increase in cynicism about democratic government and, generally, about those in power. In this case, the Nova Scotian may well end up mistrusting the motives or the courage of the city fathers, city planners, developers and government. All the evidence points to the fact that the man-on-the-street is overwhelmingly in favour of protecting what remains of the Victorian neighbourhood surrounding the Gardens. Thousands have signed peti-

the Public Gardens neighbourhood controversy is, either directly or by implication, fundamentally provincial in nature. The Heritage Property Act gives the provincial government the teeth it needs in circumstances like these. Halifax, after all, is Nova Scotia's provincial capital. The city is a creature of the province; and Dalhousie University is a creation of the province. It may indeed be that there is seldom such a case where the province should examine all the issues involved, but the Hart House controversy points to the need for government to act, not merely as a review board examining the fine print of some Act, but as an arbiter of important principles.

We often deplore Bluenose I going down as a coal barge on some West Indian reef. We tend to say, "Why didn't we do something?" And it may be that the Public Gardens would be better for being looked down on by wealthy apartment dwellers. But I don't think so. The list of old Halifax structures we wish we could have back is a long one, there is no need to make the list longer. The case made by the Friends of the Public Gardens (a non-profit organization) is that few of us realize what we have — what is still left to us. We must do everything in our power to keep the Gardens in its Victorian setting. There has been a fascinating suggestion that Halifax needs its own city museum. What better place to begin such a place than in the Hart House?

But whatever our opinions about the fate of the Hart House, there's no question the proposal to build luxury apartments on its streetscape has aroused interest, concern and anger. The issues the controversy has raised deserve debate until Halifax citizens are satisfied that, whatever the outcome, policies, procedures and official intentions are the result of prudent and democratic arbitration. If the case for ringing the Gardens with high-rise is a good one, time for debate and for all the facts to come out should be made available. Like the argument for the magical elixir of chicken soup.... "It wouldn't hurt."

...the central question is whether or not Dalhousie University had the moral right to sell the land for development...

tions to that effect. In the present circumstances, if the condominiums are built, somebody will have made a good deal of money and a hefty cross-section of the public will feel that its concerns have been ignored.

But regardless of the City's decision to build the condos, the central question is whether or not Dalhousie University, the previous owner of the Hart property, had the moral right to sell the land for development. Exacerbating the problem is that the provincial government apparently believes that this is, in essence, a "local" issue, and it is unwilling to extend its mantle over the matter. But on examination,

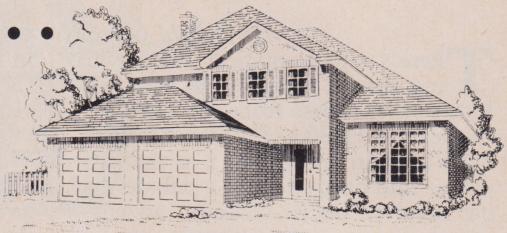
Donald Crowdus is the former executive director of the N.S. Museum.

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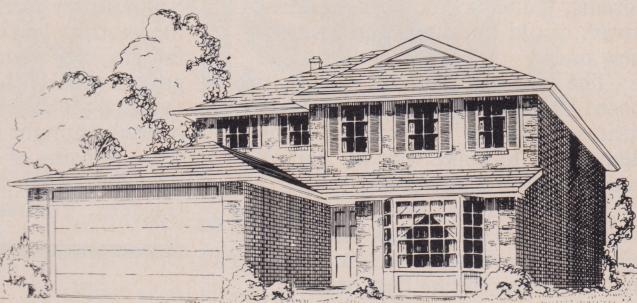
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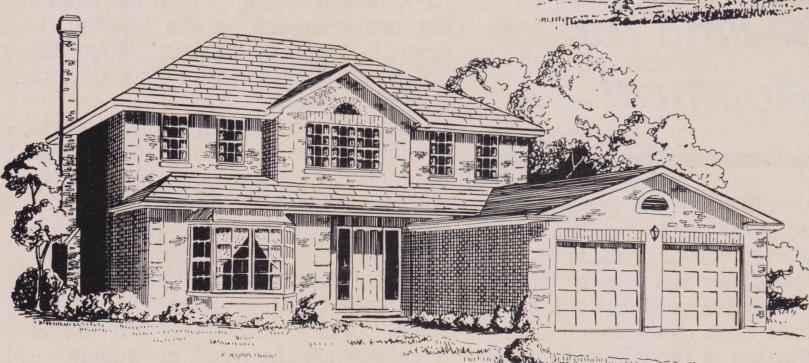
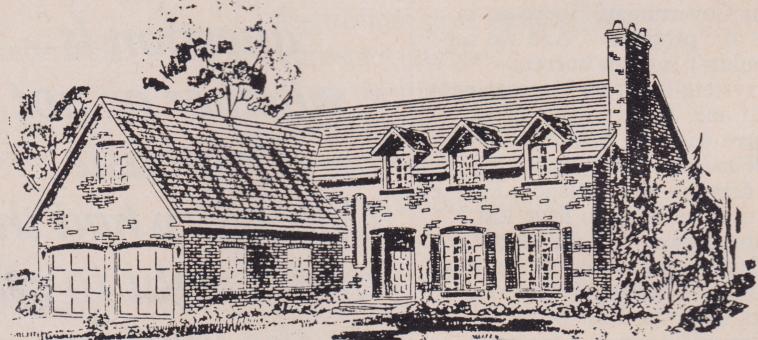
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